

Who Killed SAV?



written by Jelita P. Hopkins
illustrated by

*adapted from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's
Bay Grasses in the Classes curriculum*

Once upon a time, SAV (also known as Underwater Grasses) lived happily in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. She grew tall and thick throughout the entire Bay and even in the rivers that flowed into the Bay.

She waved back and forth in the tides,
soaking up sunlight from above, nutrients
from the sandy soil below her, and water
from all around.

So, who killed SAV? Was it Hurricane
Agnes, Clam Dredging, Development, or
Nutrients? You decide.

These extra Nutrients flowed into the creeks, streams, and rivers that flowed into the Bay. They caused algae to grow very fast and thick on the water. The algae was like a blanket on the water. It blocked out the sunlight that SAV needed to survive.

She breathed out oxygen for the fish and other underwater organisms to breathe in.

She provided food and shelter for water birds, crabs, baby fish, and tiny invertebrates in her thick leaves. She hid them from predators while they grew.

Nutrients started out as a pretty innocent guy. He helped plants to grow, including SAV. But then the people who lived in the Bay's watershed started to add lots of Nutrients to the soil. They put fertilizers and chemicals on their grass and crops to make them grow faster.

Development also caused more pollution and poisons to get into the water. With their factories, farms, cars, and lawns, the people put chemicals onto the land that washed into the rivers and streams when it rained. This poison killed lots of animals in the rivers and the Bay, and it also hurt SAV.

She filtered the water that flowed through her, catching tiny bits of dirt and pollution. She was able to help keep the water that flowed into the Bay clean and healthy. She was proud of all that she did.

But then something bad started to happen. SAV started to disappear!

A big hurricane blew across the Chesapeake Bay. The Hurricane's name was Agnes. Hurricane Agnes caused the salty ocean water at the mouth of the Bay to flow much further up into the Bay. SAV could not live with so much salt in the water around her.

Development caused trees to be chopped down and caused a lot more soil to erode into the rivers and streams that flowed into the Bay. The extra soil in the water blocked out the sunlight that SAV needed to live.

The people who lived around the Bay also wanted to build houses for themselves. Later they decided to build lots and lots of houses and other buildings, too. They used these buildings for homes, businesses, and ways to make money to help feed their families. But all of this Development was causing some very bad things to happen in the Bay.

Hurricane Agnes also caused the rivers that flowed into the Bay to flood. They tore through land and picked up lots of extra sediment and nutrients. The sediment blocked out the sunlight that SAV needed to grow and survive.

One day, the people who lived around the Bay found out that the clams and oysters that lived in SAV's shelter were delicious to eat. They decided to take lots and lots of clams and oysters out of the Bay by dredging. This means they would drag a large rake from their boats to scrape the oysters and clams off the bottom of the Bay and into their boats.

Clam Dredging did not scrape just the clams and oysters, though. SAV got caught in the rakes as well. When Clam Dredging scraped for oysters and clams, he also ripped up lots and lots of SAV.